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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 002191

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FBI FOR EAD MIKE MASON AND AD TOM FUENTES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/09/2017  
TAGS: PTER PREL AR IR BR  
SUBJECT: REACTION IN ARGENTINA TO POSITIVE NOVEMBER 7  
INTERPOL VOTE ON AMIA TERROR CASE

Classified By: DCM Tom Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Argentine officials, Jewish organizations, and private citizens lauded the Interpol General Assembly's (GA) overwhelming vote for the issuance of international capture notices for five current and former Iranian government officials and one Lebanese Hizballah member wanted in connection with the 1994 terrorist bombing of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA). The Foreign Ministry stated that "the decision confirms the overriding support shown by the international community in helping Argentina's Justice System shed light on this terrible crime." Behind the scenes, the Argentine MFA went out of its way to thank the USG. The Acting Foreign Minister called the Ambassador to express appreciation for U.S. assistance. Ambassador Wayne's public comments, based on Washington-cleared guidance, received wide coverage.

¶2. (C) As far as we are aware, the only other governments to issue statements in the wake of the vote are Israel and Iran. While the country votes in the GA are secret, Brazil informed Argentina prior to the November 7 vote that it would abstain (reported in the press), angering the Argentines. Venezuela did not send a delegation to Marrakech, with press speculation here that this may have been to avoid having to choose between Iran and Argentina. End Summary.

Argentine MFA Euphoric, Grateful to USG

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¶3. (SBU) Argentine official comments, press reports and statements from Jewish leaders and organizations uniformly applauded the decisive vote November 7 in Marrakech at the Interpol General Assembly to support the Executive Committee's decision to issue international capture notices for five current and former Iranian government officials and one senior Lebanese Hizballah member wanted in connection with the 1994 terrorist bombing of the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA). The Foreign Ministry's public statement highlighted the strong GA vote in favor of issuing the capture notices -- 78 for, 14 against, 26 abstentions -- and noted that the decision reflected the strength of international support for Argentina on this issue. AMIA's

president, Aldo Donzis, characterized the vote as "one more step towards the truth."

¶4. (C) Acting Foreign Minister Roberto Garcia Moritan called the Ambassador the day after the vote to express the deep appreciation of Minister Taiana (who is at the Ibero-American Summit in Chile) and himself for U.S. support. "Without the help and friendship of the United States, things could easily have turned out much differently," he said. On the same day, GOA Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman called Legatt from Marrakech to convey a similarly appreciative message concerning the USG's support. He was elated at the outcome, and attributed it to the support and guidance we provided over the past two years.

GOA Fuming Over Brazil's Abstention

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¶5. (C) Even during their celebration, the Argentines were in high dudgeon about what they regard as Brazil's betrayal at the General Assembly. MFA sources tell us that they received a diplomatic note from Brazil on the day of the vote announcing that the GOB would abstain. The MFA's draft post-vote press release included a thinly veiled slap at Brazil, thanking "those countries that had understood the true impact and consequence of this sad situation, and had shown this by concrete action through their votes." Foreign Minister Taiana deleted the line, MFA sources tell us.

¶6. (SBU) But the MFA made sure that their displeasure became public. They backgrounded the press about the diplomatic note to ensure that the story was widely reported. The press articles contained speculation (which we have heard directly from GOA figures like Nisman) that the abstention reflected the GOB's supposed desire not to further entangle the

triborder area (TBA) in the AMIA case. (The investigation shows that the suicide bomber traveled through the TBA, likely receiving material and logistical support from individuals there.) In an email to the DCM, a well-connected MFA source wrote that "the position of Brazil on this issue really bothers us, especially considering its aspirations to represent us regionally in the UN."

Few Statements by Other Countries, and Nothing More Expected

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¶7. (SBU) Israel and Iran are the only other governments that made statements after the vote, insofar as we are aware. Israel's ambassador to Argentina was quoted here voicing Israel's strong support for Argentina's cause, and noting that the Marrakech vote clearly identifies Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism. The Iranian charge d'affaires, Mohsen Baharvand, stressed that the Interpol decision was a procedural step, not a judgment on the merits of the case. He claimed that "Argentina had two options: accept our cooperation to really get to the truth or resort to Interpol, and it chose Interpol." Press reports also include Tehran's condemnation of the Interpol vote, claiming that Israel and U.S. had pressured Interpol and were politicizing the institution.

¶8. (SBU) An MFA source told DCM November 8 that the GOA did not intend to elicit statements of support on the matter from other governments, even within Latin America. He said that the MFA was worried that such a campaign would place some Latin American governments (e.g., Ecuador) that voted with Argentina in an uncomfortable position. DCM asked whether the GOA would use this week's Ibero-American Summit to discuss the case; he replied that he did not expect so. The Ambassador told the Acting Foreign Minister that we looked forward to discussing next steps with the GOA.

Bolivarian Solidarity?

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¶9. (SBU) Some press reports also noted that Venezuela chose not to send a delegation to Marrakech. The press attributed

this as a conscious decision by Caracas to avoid choosing between Iran and the Kirchner government. We have heard similar speculation from the MFA, which was relieved by the BRV's absence from the Marrakech meeting.

U.S. Embassy Statement

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¶10. (SBU) Embassy released the Washington-cleared statement of support late afternoon November 7, which included the Ambassador's comment that "we support the Argentine judicial system's actions to bring the perpetrators of this attack to justice, and applaud the efforts by Argentine authorities to support that objective." It received wide coverage today.

WAYNE